



Dependable, reliable, and now disposable...

ABIDJAN: DISMISSALS WHO WILL BE NEXT?

The hidden cost of dismissals:

The ILO administration needed two missions to dismiss the staff in Abidjan – 10 people travelling on mission for 5 and 3 days, with round-trip business class tickets would cost a minimum \$75,000.

One month salary at the G5 level in Abidjan – less than \$1,500.

The Director General has made his choice. It is a brutal one.

Whereas there is no justification for hasty decisions – the local situation is calm, concrete decisions on the structures of Dakar and Addis are not ready, the Abidjan office functions perfectly with the colleagues who have remained, promises have been made to the Ivory Coast to develop a technical assistance programme... – a decision was made to surreptitiously send a regional delegation to Abidjan charged with advancing the dismissals process.

Consultations were however ongoing, and were never suspended or stopped. The Staff Union was not even informed of the unilateral termination of the negotiations. The Union will reconsider its future participation in the Joint Negotiating Committee – as the role, operation and credibility of this committee have been seriously called into question based on these actions: members of personnel betrayed, Staff Union representatives nauseated, Governing Body misinformed, the whole world seeing the ILO, champion of social dialogue and decent work, acting like a socially irresponsible boss.

There is no justification for such haste – financially, humanly, socially nor politically.

There is no justification for an administration, after months of procrastination, to consider such drastic measures now that the country is finding civil peace.

Finally, nothing justifies the brutality of this decision, and the means by which it has been communicated, which has already caused several of our colleagues to be transported to hospital by the emergency medical services due to shock. This was accompanied by unacceptable attempts at both individual and collective intimidation, as security guards – recruited from outside and equipped with guns - were used to clear the office of undesirable staff and partial lock-outs were implemented to prevent staff from meeting. The Union had to call upon the Mediator because of the risk of imminent threat for the health and safety of staff represented by such practices.

Colleagues just thrown on a non-existent labour market, spouses, tens of children and hundreds of members of the extended family – there are the victims of administrative obstinacy. This situation is made all the more lamentable, as other approaches were possible – approaches which preserved occupational status, dignity and opportunities for local staff.

IN THE EVENT OF A NATIONAL CRISIS, THE ILO HAS SURVIVED UP TO NOW WITH THE LEBANESE MODEL (10 YEARS OF CIVIL WAR WITH FULL EMPLOYMENT MAINTAINED). THE IVORIAN APPROACH IS VERY DIFFERENT (PEACE PROCESS WITH DISMISSALS).

The choice that was made in the name of the Director General harms everyone: the personnel, of course; the Office as a whole, whose image is destroyed; the collective bargaining process, which cannot tolerate the wilful disregard of contractual agreements and good faith negotiations.

OUR COLLEAGUES HAVE REFUSED THEIR DISMISSAL LETTERS.
IT IS UP TO US TO NOW UPHOLD THEIR ACTION

Staff Union Committee, 3 June 2005.